

Happy Birthday, Mama Mary!

Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Micah 5:1-4a or Romans 8:28-30

Psalm 13:6ab, 6c

Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 (alternate reading: Luke 6:12-19) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, (3) and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, (4) and Ram the father of Ammin'adab, and Ammin'adab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, (5) and Salmon the father of Bo'az by Rahab, and Bo'az the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, (6) and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah, (7) and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehobo'am the father of Abi'jah, and Abi'jah the father of Asa, (8) and Asa the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehosh'aphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah, (9) and Uzzi'ah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah, (10) and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manas'seh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josi'ah, (11) and Josi'ah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (12) And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoni'ah was the father of She-al'ti-el, and She-al'ti-el the father of Zerub'babel, (13) and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abi'ud the father of Eli'akim, and Eli'akim the father of Azor, (14) and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud, (15) and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Elea'zar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, (16) and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

(18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy

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Spirit; (19) and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. (20) But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary

your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; (21) she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (22) All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: (23) "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"

(which means, God with us).

Meditation by Andy Alexander, S.J.

It is delightful, Dear Mary, to reflect upon your birth. We are so very accustomed to wishing people "Happy Birthday," but I don't think I've really taken the time to acknowledge your birthday in a personal way. I don't think I've stopped to thank God for the day you were born.

The Birth of Mary by Esteban Murillo - Louvre, Paris It must have been an amazing day in the history of creation. I'm sure it was an ordinary day in Nazareth. Of course, your parents were excited, as were neighbors and friends. None of them could have known about the rejoicing in

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heaven on that day. It was the plan of the Trinity to send the Second Person to become one of us, to save this human race from its mad free fall into sin and death. That plan was about to come to pass.

Your conception opened the door to salvation for us all. By God's grace, the saving grace your Son would win for us, which would liberate all of us from sin and death's power, touched you there and then. You would be free. You would be born, "full of grace."

On the human level, I have many questions. I wonder if the sun was shining all day that day. Did the birds sing more joyfully that morning? Did a very young boy, named Joseph, hear about your birth, perhaps just a few homes down the street from his?

I thank you, Mary, for your life. I thank you for your openness and for your "yes." I thank you for how you raised Jesus to be so full of compassion and to be a friend of sinners and the poor. I thank you for being such a strong and comforting presence to the Apostles in those early days of waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Most of all I personally thank you for your role in my life. As you know, I didn't really have any personal devotion or anything one might call a "friendship" with you before I made the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It was there, following his life story, and asking you over and over again to help me, that I came to know you and appreciate your care and availability in our lives.

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So, today, Mary, on your birthday, I want to simply and sincerely ask you the prayer Ignatius would pray to you: Dear Mary, place me with your Son. Let me know him, love him and serve him more closely. Stand guard over my heart and let his gift of peace remain there, when the everyday disturbances of life threaten to take it away. And, finally, holy Mary, Mother of my God, pray for this sinner, now and at the hour of my death.

Supplementary Reading

A PooR mAID'S SToRy

{xtypo_quote} You are respected everywhere except in your own hometown and family . . . –
Matthew 13:57 {/xtypo_quote}

She was a poor lady, the daughter of a laundrywoman, who worked as a maid in my grandmother's house back in the '60s. She eventually got married to my uncle. Do I see some eyebrows rising?

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Sounds like a typical movie plot: Poor girl marrying a rich guy. Simply put, everybody was against the union. But against all odds, my uncle and aunt bravely sailed on and traveled together through the many journeys of life despite the rejections and insults hurled at them by family members and neighbors.

Today, after 40 years of marriage, they own hectares of lands, a chain of condos and tall commercial buildings, to name a few of their business empires. They have become the richest among our relatives who used to berate my aunt because she was just a poor maid's daughter.

As Christians, we shouldn't look down on people because of the social class they belong to, who they are or where they come from. Because in the eyes of God, we are all His children.

And who knows? Down the road, we might just find that the years have reversed our fortunes.
Henry Yu

REFLECTION:

{xtypo_quote} Beware so long as you live, of judging men by their outward appearance. --Jean de la Fontaine {/xtypo_quote}

Lord, help me to accept people for who they are and not for what I want them to be.

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GOD BLESS US ALL! PRAY as if everything depended on **HIM. ACT** as if everything depended on **YOU.**

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